

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

The EWP program is designed to reduce threats to life and property in the wake of natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and fires. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to communities recovering from these events. Practices include debris removal, channel stabilization, streambank protection, gully control, and establishing vegetation.

South Carolina was fortunate to avoid any major disasters in FY 2002. Clean up of Hurricane Floyd damage in Horry County and emergency repairs to Lake Conestee in Greenville County were completed by NRCS. The US Forest Service also completed a repair project in Charleston County funded by NRCS.

South Carolina Grasslands Coalition (SCGC)

The SCGC was formed in response to the need to promote improved grassland management, provide research and education, and offer assistance to producers. This has been an exciting and productive year for the Coalition. Silvopasture training was provided to over sixty participants including private forestry consultants, foresters, wildlife biologists, and NRCSers. The Coalition also spearheaded an effort to create and improve quail habitat on grazing lands throughout South Carolina. The Grass, Cattle and Quail Initiative was presented at the 2002 National Quail Unlimited Annual meeting.

Cost Share Programs



NRCS provides technical and cost share assistance to landowners through programs authorized under the Farm Bill, which assists landusers in conserving natural resources throughout South Carolina. In the Spring of 2002, President George W. Bush signed the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

Commonly referred to as the Farm Bill, the legislation represents the single most significant commitment of financial resources toward conservation on private lands in the Nation's history.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Four hundred EQIP applications were submitted for ranking, totaling more than \$6 million. As a result, 200 contracts were developed to assist landowners in reducing soil erosion, improving water quality, and protecting wildlife habitats. These contracts obligated 3.6 million federal dollars to help landowners install conservation measures on nearly 40,000 acres of private lands.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

In 2002, NRCS continued to implement WHIP contracts with landowners. Highlighted among these are *Partners for Trout*, a trout preservation project in the upstate of South Carolina, and a waterfowl project on the coast. The program improved wildlife habitat on over 10,000 acres of South Carolina's private lands.

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)

Reforestation is critically needed in many areas of South Carolina. Through FIP in 2002, NRCS received 1,500 applications for assistance, totaling \$3 million. NRCS assisted landowners in developing 400 contracts, which obligated nearly \$350,000 of federal cost share assistance to help reforest over 11,000 acres.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

WRP has been very popular in South Carolina for the past six years. As a result, WRP easement payments in 2002 were made on over 5,000 acres, with \$10 million of cost share assistance provided for landowners to restore or enhance wetland conditions. To date, more than 25,000 acres in South Carolina have been enrolled in WRP.

Counties with WRP sites

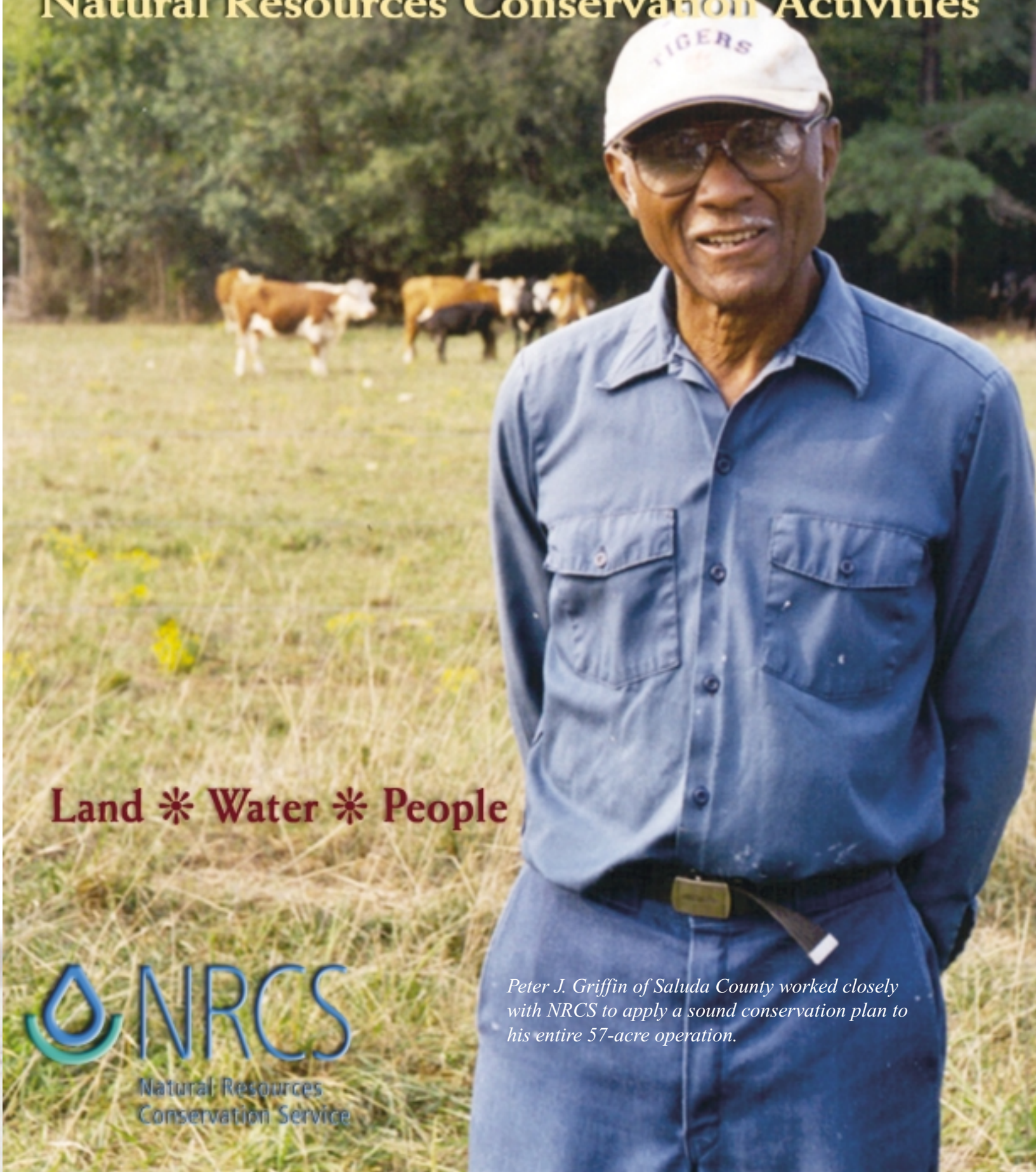


Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

NRCS assisted more than 300 landowners in developing applications for enrollment in CRP, resulting in 200 conservation plans being approved, totalling 20,500 acres. NRCS also assisted landowners in developing contracts on these lands, with approximately \$300,000 of cost sharing provided to install conservation practices on CRP contracted acres. Annual rental payments reached \$7.6 million, largely due to CRP Continuous Sign Up 24, and the installation of environmentally sensitive practices such as conservation buffers.



2002 South Carolina Report Natural Resources Conservation Activities



Land * Water * People



Peter J. Griffin of Saluda County worked closely with NRCS to apply a sound conservation plan to his entire 57-acre operation.



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**NRCS
Mission**

*To provide leadership
in a partnership
effort to help people
conserve, improve,
and sustain our
natural resources and
environment*

**NRCS
Vision**

*A Productive Nation
in Harmony with a
Quality Environment*

I am pleased to report that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in South Carolina had a successful year of conservation efforts in 2002.

NRCS staff, working with the South Carolina Conservation Partnership, other natural resources partners, and the land users of the state, made great strides in conserving, protecting, and enhancing the state's natural resources.

Soil erosion was minimized, water quality improved, wildlife habitat enhanced, wetlands restored, and other critical conservation practices were carried out. It is gratifying to know that South Carolinians love the land and are willing to take steps to protect and improve it--for both the present and future generations.

With the signing of Farm Bill 2002 by President Bush this spring, conservation on America's private lands was given a huge boost.

While much has been accomplished, much still remains to be done. NRCS looks forward to another exciting and challenging year in 2003. We are prepared for the challenge that lies ahead and determined to succeed in our efforts to protect South Carolina's beautiful natural resources.

Walter W. Taylor
State Conservationist



Small Farmer Understands Importance of Conservation



Peter Griffin, left, of Saluda County, is a beef producer who operates a small 57-acre operation. He worked closely with NRCS' Hugh Smith, local district conservationist, to apply a sound conservation plan to his entire operation.

Peter Griffin is a Saluda County beef producer who believes in working hard to produce the finest product. He works tirelessly to tend his primary farming enterprise--a beef cattle herd consisting of 20 brood cows, 5 heifers, and 1 bull. He also raises chickens for eggs and has 40-acres of row-cropped soybeans. Griffin applied a sound conservation plan to his entire 57-acre operation with the technical assistance of District Conservationist Hugh Smith, financial assistance from the limited resource farmer project and a grant from the NRCS Social Sciences Institute. The conservation plan's success is also due to Griffin's commitment to overall resource management. He utilizes prescribed grazing and nutrient and pest management. He also improved the health and vitality of his herd with installation of heavy use areas, water troughs, and pasture planting. He regularly tests his soil to maintain proper nutrients for maximum forage cover, which in turn reduces silt and sediment.

Working closely with NRCS, Griffin has protected the soil and water resources surrounding his farming operation and passed on his outstanding conservation ethic to his friends, neighbors, children, and grandchildren.

NRCS employees, working in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR)-Land Resources and Conservation Districts Division and the South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts, serve all 46 counties in South Carolina through 39 USDA Service Centers.

Individuals and communities receive one-on-one technical assistance from a multi-disciplinary staff, which includes soil conservationists, engineers, soil scientists, biologists, and agronomists – working together to ensure that the landuser receives the latest science-based technology and up-to-date natural resource information available for conservation on private lands. In 2002, assistance was provided to 13,633 agricultural producers who applied conservation on 167,127 farmland acres.



Landowner John Berry, left, worked with NRCS Soil Technician Lee Nicholson to install a drip irrigation system to water 12 acres of peach and plum trees.

Program Summary

Watershed Programs

The PL 83-566 Watershed Program provides opportunities for NRCS to provide both technical and financial assistance to communities to help them identify and solve natural resource problems on a watershed basis. Projects are implemented for flood prevention, recreation, fish and wildlife, municipal and industrial water supply, erosion control, water quality enhancements, or combinations of these purposes.

Six projects are in various stages of planning, design, or implementation. Construction of Phase One of the Holly Hill Flood Prevention Project in Orangeburg County was completed in 2002. Contracts with private landowners for land treatment measures were made in three project areas. NRCS continues to work with local sponsors in Dillon, Williamsburg, and Berkeley Counties to initiate planning for new project areas.

Between 1954 and 1990, a total of 104 dams were built in the state under this program. Over half of these dams are more than 30 years old. The Small Watershed Rehabilitation Act (PL 106-472) provides federal assistance in rehabilitating watershed dams. Requests for assessments of the conditions of about half of these dams have been made by project sponsors. Assessments are scheduled to begin in January 2003.

Soils Resources and Assistance

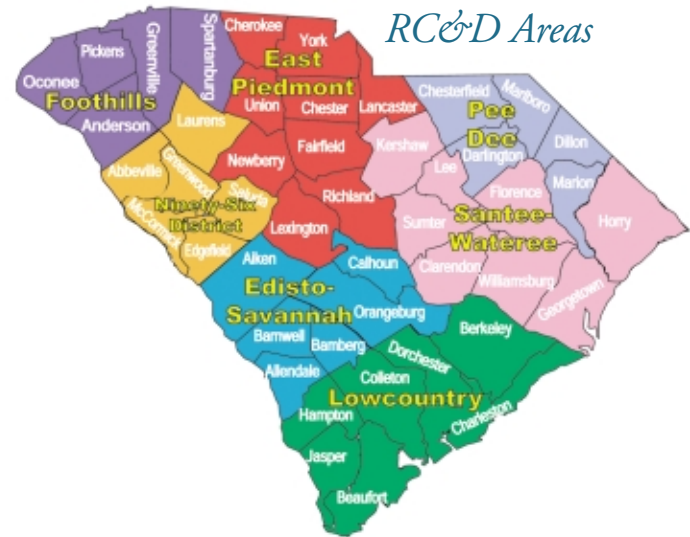
Maintaining a healthy soil base is extremely important to the overall conservation of South Carolina's natural resources. All soil surveys in South Carolina have been digitized and are available on-line at www.dnr.state.sc.us/water/nrima/gisdata. This site also has color infared information. Tabular data for all soil surveys in South Carolina is available at www.esri.sc.edu/soils_final/county.aspx.

The Soil Science Society of South Carolina was formed to educate the public about the importance of the wise use of soil resources. This group then founded the South Carolina Coalition for Soil Education. Composed of educators and other natural resource professionals, the group developed hands-on soils kits for use in grades K-2 and plans on expanding distribution of the kits based on teacher response.

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

South Carolina has complete state RC&D coverage with seven areas– East Piedmont, Pee Dee, Ninety-Six District, Edisto-Savannah, Lowcountry, Santee-Wateree, and Foothills.

RC&D's are “making things happen” in the state's rural communities with over 30 community-based projects completed in 2002, in addition to the statewide *POWER for Wildlife* program. The program funded 113 projects on 625 acres. *Wheels to Work*, a program that makes automobiles available and affordable for people transitioning from welfare to work, was also started. The program offers eligible participants the opportunity to purchase an automobile with low, no-interest monthly payments and no money down.



Outreach and Special Projects

NRCS in South Carolina is implementing extensive outreach efforts to serve various minority, racial and ethnic groups.

NRCS continues to partner with South Carolina State University (an 1890 land grant institution) to support the Savannah River Environmental Sciences Field Station at the Savannah River Site located in Aiken County. The Center provides environmental sciences training opportunities to undergraduate students from 26 historically black colleges and universities, and other partnering institutions of higher learning.

The agency has also developed a working relationship with the Catawba Indian Nation, the only federally recognized tribe in South Carolina, headquartered in York County. NRCS' Outreach Coordinator met with the Governor's Committee on American Indian tribes to provide information on NRCS programs and available assistance.